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WAR SUFFERERS'
# RELIEF BULLETIN

*"Not to be ministered unto, but to minister"*

November, 1945 — MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE — Vol. I No. 9

## Refugee Work in Italy

**By Delvin Kirchofer**

*Working with UNRRA's Italian Mission are five Mennonite relief workers—Delvin Kirchhofer, Arthur Jahnke, Grace Augsburger, Bertha Fast, and Esther Detweiler. This entire group of workers was shifted from Egypt where they had served in the large camps for Yugoslav refugees. Brother Kirchhofer has been serving in the capacity of a welfare worker both in Egypt and Italy.*—Editor.

Since my last letter to you I have had some interesting experiences. I was asked to be commandant for a trainload of 1,100 refugees who were to be taken from the di Leuca camp to Aversa, which is above Rome. From there they were to be repatriated. The "show" started on Friday morning, September 21, when we began to load the people onto boxcars, trying to get nationalities and their luggage into the same boxcars. While we were loading, several who had old grudges, made use of this opportunity and consequently they had several stabbings most of which were quite severe. We made up two separate trains of twenty cars each—the first one leaving the camp at 4:00 p.m. and the second one, on which the staff members traveled, left at 5:15. After about two hours' riding, the two trains were joined together at Lecce and from then on we were one train of forty boxcars, drawn and pushed by two and sometimes three engines.

### Poor Facilities

I was quite ill at ease because at the last moment the method of food distribution to the individual cars broke down and some of the refugees got no food to take on the trip. Also, to make matters much worse, I learned when I first arrived that no provisions were made for drinking water en route nor for toilet facilities. With many women and children on board, this was almost tragic in my estimation, but when I objected I was told that nothing could be done about it now. Fortunately, everything went better than I expected. Each time the train stopped, crowds of people would jump from the train and run for either the water hydrant beside the tracks or for the bushes. When the train started again they would come flocking back. I tried to get the engineer to give them a one-minute warning whistle, but for some reason he very seldom obeyed my request and so the people had to be dragged on board after the train had already started to move. The job was made more difficult because in the 1,100 people there were twenty-three different nationalities represented. I found a few who could speak either English or German and who could also speak most of the other languages as well, although I had no official interpreter with me. I was worried because the people would either hang on to the sides of the train or crawl to the tops of the cars, and when we went through the dozens of tunnels through the mountains I was always afraid some of them would be brushed off. Fortunately we got through without any accident.

### Many Nationalities

We went from Lecce to Aversa through Brindisi, Taranto, Salerno, and Naples.

I was accompanied by two other staff members—a nisei lady doctor from my own camp, and a nurse from Texas stationed at di Leuca. I had chosen a caboose as the hospital car which also served as our living quarters. This car I placed in the middle of the two trains when they were combined so that I could run forward twenty cars or back twenty cars when the train would stop to see if everything was all right. I forgot to say that in our hospital car we had an Abyssinian woman with tuberculosis of the spine, a Maltese mother with a five-day-old baby, and another little Abyssinian girl of about seven months whose mother was dead and whom the nurse knew well and called "Topsy." Both the babies were splendid passengers and cried only once during the entire trip. We had on board over 500 Maltese, over 300 Turks, and the rest were from other countries—such as Eritrea, Iran, even from South American countries. One Swiss boy, who has no one at his home any more, is now on the way to Egypt with an Egyptian girl he met in camp. They expect to get married in Egypt upon their arrival.

We left di Leuca on Friday night and kept travelling until 2:00 a.m. Sunday morning when we arrived in Aversa. We stayed on the train until morning when the commandant of the camp came to take charge of unloading. We three staff members went along to camp with the hospital patients, cleaned up, and got some warm food; then we were taken to Naples to await transport back to camp. We got to Naples on Sunday afternoon but it was Wednesday forenoon until we got transport to take us back to camp. During that time we had a fine chance to rest up from the ordeal, for it was that, although it was most interesting. We left Naples by jeep but got into rain and cold wind. Although I was dressed warmly I was not feeling well by the time we got to Bari where we stayed overnight. The next morning I was little better, but we continued on our way. We got into more rain and by the time we arrived back in camp I was quite sick with bronchitis. I went to bed immediately. I feel much better again but still have a cough and am weak. Another day or two will see me well again, I am sure.

# Notes from the Field

**Distribution of Tomato Puree.**—Saturday morning (October 20) while it was still dark, Freda and I left on a long tour to distribute the shipments of tomato puree to various sanatoriums. In the course of our journey we went beyond Enschede, right up to the German border (where the sign reads: "Von hier wird unmittelbar geschossen"). Although we didn't come home until past midnight, we felt that it had been a very successful and worth while journey. In my next letter I will forward on to you some of the letters of thanks from the sanatoriums.—Peter Dyck.

**Prospecting in Ethiopia.**—The past month (September) has been spent in making additional contacts, in language study, in waiting for the rains to stop, and in waiting for the car, which the government has promised us, to arrive. However, we do expect to get started soon on our long-anticipated trip to find the location of our unit. We have an English-Amharic-Galla speaking driver and cook to go with us and we are accumulating a bit of camping equipment. Dr. Campell, our chief adviser and our principal contact with the government here, sent up one of his laboratory technicians who has just returned from the province of Gojjam and the area about Debra Markos. It seems evident that this is the area in which he would like to have us locate; both of the principal missions here recommend this area, too. It will be a big decision to make. We will also want to be sure to have the Lord's will in the matter.—Samuel Yoder.

**Rains Arrive in Paraguay.**—Things are beginning to look a little better now (October 6) than they did a month ago. We have had about four and one-half inches of rain since then, and people are in better hopes. The corn, kaffir, peanuts, beans, and some cotton have been planted and begin to show the rows. Without water, man and beast cannot survive. At places it was very difficult to get enough water for the cattle, but now the low places are full of water. We all rejoice for these blessings from on High.—A. M. Lohrentz.

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# Thinking about Relief

**"Give Ye Them to Eat"**

To every Christian in today's world who is at all aware of the material destruction and sensitive to the human suffering which has come upon the peoples of Europe and Asia as a result of the past war, there must come from time to time an overwhelming sense of the enormous magnitude of the need which calls for a ministry of relief and rehabilitation. As we survey this need and look at our resources, great as they are, we are inclined to exclaim as a disciple of Jesus did on one occasion: "But what are they among so many?" The facts pass before our eyes in our newspapers and church papers: 8,000,000 Germans face a winter of starvation; 10,000,000 children in China are war orphans; eighty per cent of the villages in eastern Belgium are devastated; four out of every ten babies in Italy die before their first birthday—and so on. It is good for us to realize the size of this need if for no other reason than to bring us to the end of ourselves.

When we are conscious of this great want, the command of Christ comes to us: "Give ye them to eat." We are inclined to hesitate because of the size of the multitude to be fed, and we think of the inadequacy of our loaves and fishes. But we must have the faith to give what we have. When we give it to Christ we may have the assurance that He will bless to His own glory. By spiritual calculations our seemingly little may feed the multitude. We do not concern ourselves so much with the results and the far-reaching effects of our gifts. To us comes the plea: "Give ye them to eat."

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**C.P.S. Men Released**

One implication of the recent decision of Selective Service to release C.P.S. assignees will be the availability of a sizable group of young men for relief service. Many of these men have waited for four years for this opportunity and their vision has not abated. Others have changed their plans. For the churches, their release will mean the opportunity to recruit much-needed personnel for the relief fields. The men themselves look forward to an opportunity to perform a relief ministry and through such a service give further expression to our peace testimony. With many others, Mennonites have refused to endeavor to overcome evil with carnal weapons. If our position has a positive answer it now behooves us to serve war sufferers in a constructive program of relief and rehabilitation. What would be more fitting than to have many of our young men who have publicly taken their stand against war now enter the battle areas and so-called enemy countries on a mission of Christian charity and good will!

* * *

**A Sidelight on Mennonite Relief Workers**

The Americans were nearly all boys of twenty-two or so, either Friends or Mennonites, a sect that has kept up its old Puritan customs and still live as their ancestors did, keeping the Sabbath and abjuring wine, tobacco, theatres, and dance halls. They were of good pioneer stock, some of them farm lads, others engineers, carpenters, and plumbers. They came from all over the States—some from Kansas, Ohio, Virginia, and Cincinnati, while others had been raised along with apples (and were as wholesome to look at) in Washington State and the far West. . . .

. . . She told risky stories at table about the private life of President Wilson and the night clubs she had visited in Paris and made the Mennonites blush and look at their plates. . . .

—Excerpts from **In the Margins of Chaos,** by Francesca Wilson, a book recently published on relief experiences from the time of World War I to the present. In 1920 the author had met Friends and Mennonites in South Serbia, where there was a unit under the American Friends Service Committee.

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Hundreds of thousands of European Jews face a hideous future unless they can be shipped to places where they can get a fresh start. The waters of international concord are being stirred by an American drive to get the British to open up Palestine. But the British hesitate to accept the American viewpoint because they, unlike the United States may run into serious difficulties amounting to virtual warfare, if they arouse the hostility of the Arab world. While this debate proceeds, the Jews get nowhere. (WP)

# Reports from the Desert

*We continue "Reports from the Desert," although more than half of the Mennonite personnel in the Middle East has been shifted to Italy, Ethiopia, and England. Henry Detwiler, Helen Moser, and Martha Eiman continue their service at the El Shatt Camp while Marie Brunk has been assigned to the Cairo office of UNRRA's Displaced Persons Division.—Editor.*

**More Refugees Arrive**

We had quite a busy time the last two weeks in September. We received 1,100 Greeks from a camp in Ethiopia for repatriation. After they were received and settled, the Greek camp at Nuseirat was closed down also and all those people were removed down here by train—3,700 of them. So in addition to the 9,000 Yugoslavs still here, our city on the Sinai Desert is again in full swing. We have been sending small flights of Greeks out since they came here. So far three have left, with each containing from 150 to 450 people. The first one to leave met with trouble. About thirty miles outside of Port Said the ship caught fire, necessitating abandoning the ship. In the confusion some jumped into the water and were lost. Those that stayed on board until the rescue ships arrived were taken off without any injury or trouble. Definite figures are not available yet on loss of lives, but it will be under fifty from information now available. Martha Eiman and Helen Moser were among the nurses sent to Port Said to care for the survivors until they could be returned here to camp. We expect the entire group of survivors to arrive back here tomorrow evening. It certainly is a cruel twist of fate for these people to suffer almost at the end of their refugee journeyings and lose everything they have except what they were wearing.—Henry Detwiler.

**Recreation and Education**

My work during September has been exceedingly interesting. Due to the fact that the work in Central Registry has greatly diminished with the repatriation of Yugoslavs, I have been given additional duties of a different nature. I have been helping with the recreational and educational program of the camp. Mornings and afternoons are spent in conducting handicraft classes for children of all ages. The boys carve ships, airplanes, camels, and various other toys from wood while the girls make dolls and doll clothing, belts, and pocketbooks from cloth. The classes have grown so that I have had to divide them four times.

Every evening for an hour I help to teach English to some sixty girls. Many or rather most of these girls are immigrants going to some English-speaking country. After dinner, five nights a week, I assist in an adult English class. These classes are mostly conversational and are conducted to help students become more fluent in speaking English. Occasionally we show them slides so that they can see how we live in America and compare it with their Yugoslav customs. I enjoyed working in the Central Registry but this far exceeds anything I have done yet.—Marie Brunk

**Leaving Egypt**

These past sixteen months with UNRRA have really been a worth while experience—I shall never regret having this assignment. It may be a bit difficult to believe, but I regretted pulling up stakes and leaving my little tent on the desert sands. Somehow it grew upon me, living as we did—there is something cozy, warm, and friendly about it all. . . .

The last day I was in camp, my kitchen force invited me to be their guest at a farewell dinner. They have always given me things to eat for they are built sturdy and to them I was quite thin. In giving me food these past months they learned what I liked most, so they included those dishes on the menu for the farewell meal. We sat around a big table, about sixteen of us, and conversed in a mixture of Yugoslav and English, and we got along quite well. I had to think how far we had gone in learning to know each other during thirteen months. Tears filled their eyes as we said good-bye and they said how much they appreciated our efforts in their behalf. It was enough to assure me again that our few sacrifices for them have been worth while.—Mary Emma Showalter

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And to speak in general, we can produce no example wherein our fathers got any success by war, or failed of success when without war, they committed themselves to God.—Josephus

# Relief Work in Alsace-Lorraine

*The following reports from M. C. Lehman were written from Basel, Switzerland, September 26, 1945. Basel is the headquarters for relief activities in the Switzerland-Alsace sector of the Northwest Europe Mennonite relief program.—Editor.*

Since my last report on the work in Alsace I have made two visits to the destitute Mennonite families in St. Louis and am planning to proceed to the area in the neighborhood of Saargemuend and Colmar with a final visit to destitute families in Luxembourg. A location and distribution map of Mennonite congregations and families has now been prepared and can be used on this trip.

Approximately 150 family Bibles have been purchased and will be sent over the border tomorrow to the Widmer home at Mulhouse for distribution. Brother Stettler, a Swiss conference leader who has some connection with the Helvetia Sewing Machine Company, has agreed to purchase fifteen sewing machines from his company at a thirty per cent discount for sale to the M.C.C. Don Suisse has agreed to get these over the border to Mulhouse for us. They will be distributed to destitute Mennonite families.

**War Prisoners**

Don Suisse—a Swiss relief organization—is caring for suffering German war prisoners at St. Louis and it would accordingly be unwise for us to do the same work in the same camp as they. Conditions are even worse in prison camps at Mulhouse and Colmar and when I go to Luxembourg I propose to stop at these camps and see if there is any way in which we can relieve suffering there. I will make a report on the matter after my next visit to Alsace-Lorraine. I will take Brother Volkmar with me on this trip and will use the car at Mulhouse. The object will be a continuation of the spiritual ministry begun in the preliminary survey trip.

**Soup and Milk Kitchens**

The opening of soup and milk kitchens in Mulhouse among the destitute calcium workers is strongly urged by both Don Suisse and Entr'Aide Francaise, a French relief organization. Such a project appeals strongly to the Swiss Mennonites and a conference with their relief committee will be held after my interview with Entr'Aide Francaise and Don Suisse with a view to facilitate an organizational arrangement for the Swiss Mennonites to work such a project. I will report on this before final plans are made especially on the prospects and conditions for the use of American personnel and funds. The need for clothing, bedding, shoes, and soap before winter is urgent.

My next visit is to be to the widely scattered Mennonite families North of Montbeliard. That will be a particularly difficult journey as most of them live in backward hill sections. Brother Goldschmidt will probably accompany me on that trip. There is some indication that the Swiss Government may now remove its restrictions on the use of cars in France which have been purchased in Switzerland.

**Swiss Mennonite Conference**

I attended the Swiss Mennonite Conference at Langnau on September 22 and 23 with a view to learning all I could about the Mennonite Church in Switzerland, especially with regard to their attitude toward a Mennonite center at Basel. The spirit of the conference was one of thoroughgoing co-operation with Mennonite relief projects and keen interest was expressed in the center at Basel. They are ready to co-operate with American Mennonites in relief work both financially and organizationally. Various projects such as soup and milk kitchens from Basel and help for German prisoners of war at Mulhouse and Colmar interest them. They are especially eager to help suffering German Mennonites when once political conditions make this possible.

**Attitude toward Military Service**

The Swiss Government still allows Mennonites the privilege of noncombatant military service, but some of the younger leaders, among them church elders, are officers in the army. This is opposed by a strong minority and is passively condoned by the majority. Some of the young leaders have already begun to study English in order to get the spirit of American Mennonitism. The situation is one of hopefulness so far as support for co-operation with American Mennonites in a center at Basel is concerned. American Mennonites will need to be quite clear throughout in their commitments for a real Biblical Mennonitism. This can be done tactfully and a foundation and frame work for a center at Basel can be constructed.—M. C. Lehman.

# Investigation in Belgium

The day after my return John L. Horst arrived in Amsterdam hoping that our car and I would be available for a tour of eastern Belgium. It was good to have him with us for some days and to acquaint him with the work and people here. Our tour in Belgium brought us into intimate contact with much poverty and great misery. It is generally known and, sadly enough often taken for granted, especially in England that people who depend on coal mining for a livelihood are poor people. It is quite obvious that these Belgian miners whose homes and villages we visited had but a meager existence before the war, but such poverty as we found there now has to be seen to be believed. True, the Belgian government is much concerned with total restoration of the coal-mining industry, and to that end gives special concessions to coal miners, but when little or no clothing is available, when building materials are entirely beyond reach and when the food situation, although much improved, is still unsatisfactory, then a rise in wages even to the doubling of prewar income is not sufficient. What is needed is not only more money, but the goods which nowadays these people cannot get for their money.

Quite another aspect of human suffering presented itself in the villages of eastern Belgium, along the Luxembourg frontiers, where fighting has been exceptionally heavy. We visited villages which have changed hands not once or twice but as often as five and six times. Can you imagine what is left of such villages? One would think that eight months after liberation reconstruction would be well underway, but such is not the case, at least it does not appear to be so. In actual fact much has been accomplished by way of clearing up debris and beginning with the erection of new homes, but when one thinks of the fact that all this has taken up the entire summer and that now winter is at the door and still a whole village often boasts of no more than three or four houses, then one wonders what the next months will bring.

These same conditions, perhaps even worse because liberation was much later, exist in the southern and eastern provinces of Holland. In these provinces there is yet an additional grievous trouble which Belgium fortunately has to contend with no longer, namely that of land mines which keep the farmers off their fields and out of their orchards. Impatient of "official" mine-sweeping the farmers in some districts came together in a sort of "bee" attempting the perilous job themselves, but had to give it up again after some time on account of the number of mishaps.—Peter Dyck

# One Year in Hospital Service

The people of the La Plata community in Puerto Rico have seen a number of changes within their community in the last two years. One of the changes that they have witnessed was the converting of an old warehouse into a hospital. On August 13, 1944, that hospital was dedicated to the people of Puerto Rico and its doors were opened to the ill people who need medical service. Since the opening of the hospital one year ago a large medical service has been rendered to the people of La Plata and the near-by communities. During the year, 164 major and 407 minor operations have been performed in the Mennonite Hospital, making a total of 571 operations. The records show that 880 people have been admitted to the hospital. The average amount of time spent in the hospital was 6.8 days. The total number of hospital days for the year was 5,970. Forty infants have been born in the hospital this past year.

The records of the out-patient department show that considerable medical service has been given through the hospital clinic. From a total of 6,922 patients visiting the hospital clinic, 2,986 have been new patients. The laboratory reports show that 663 X rays have been taken during the past year. The number of urinalyses made were 1,970; stool examinations, 1,881; blood serologies, 748.—**Rio La Plata**, September, 1945

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The clothing situation is unbelievably bad, and this applies also to bedding, furniture, household equipment, and sheets. One day we called on the acting mayor of Amsterdam. He had on a pair of shoes on which he pulled the soles back. His socks had holes in them and his shirt was badly frayed. That was all the clothing he had. —R. H. Mansfield, treasurer of American Relief for Holland in October NEWS BULLETIN.

# Peace Notes

### C.P.S. Interest in Relief Service

The Relief Section at Akron is surveying the Mennonite camps to determine how many assignees are interested in foreign relief service and are qualified according to M.C.C. standards. While not all of the units have replied at the time of this writing, there are indications that approximately 150 men will volunteer. It is believed that about twenty-five demobilized assignees will be appointed by the end of the year. In brief the requirements for foreign service at present are: (1) twenty-four years of age or over. (2) good physical health for the area in which they are to serve, (3) a high school education or an equivalent skill, and (4) an exemplary Christian life that will be a true witness for Christ and the Church.

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### Educational Assistance for C.P.S. Men

"The Mennonite and Brethren in Christ schools, with their boards of education, have worked out a plan for giving educational assistance to C.P.S. men who enroll in their schools. In general, the plan provides for free tuition for every month in C.P.S. up to twenty-seven months. This assistance is available to non-Mennonites as well as Mennonite men who have been in M.C.C. units. The C.P.S. man is urged to take advantage of this opportunity as soon as possible after his discharge and must complete his education under this plan within five years after his discharge. Each college is prepared to give assistance in helping the man to earn his maintenance."

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### Mennonite Aid

With the beginning of C.P.S. demobilization and the knowledge that there are thousands of Mennonite refugees in Europe, it appears as though there is a heavy responsibility ahead for the Mennonite Aid Section. The present activities relate more especially to C.P.S. men. J. Winfield Fretz continues to be director of the Section, although he has returned for part-time work at Bethel College. Roy Umble, the educational liaison between C.P.S. and the Mennonite colleges, is giving part time to the Mennonite Aid office particularly in the area of counseling. An effort is being made to have someone in each camp and unit serve in an advisory capacity in behalf of C.P.S. men who are being demobilized.

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### Mental Hygiene Program

One implication of the C.P.S. demobilization picture is the future of the Mental Hygiene Program. Begun by C.P.S. men to further the care of the mentally ill, the organization has become significant so that a folding up at the present time seems undesirable. Plans have been made to have the Mental Hygiene continue to function with considerable expansion in research, public education, and periodical publication. More than 1,000 Mennonite young men from Mennonite camps have served in mental hospitals and training schools and it is known that some of these men are interested in making a career of mental hospital service. Growing out of this interest is an effort on the part of the M.C.C. to study the desirability of entering this field of service. At the present time a survey is being conducted to determine the extent of mental illness among Mennonite and Brethren in Christ groups and what opportunities there might be to serve our people along this line.

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### The C.P.S. Vision

The **C.P.S. Bulletin,** semi-monthly news sheet to Mennonite camps during the past several months ran a symposium on "The C.P.S. Vision" to determine, if possible, a bit more clearly the motivation and idealism behind the Mennonite C.P.S. program. Most contributors to this symposium were in agreement when interpreting the C.P.S. vision in terms of Christian love. One said that the C.P.S. vision is "an adequate expression of the principle of Christian love." Another declared that "the C.P.S. vision is the real meaning of nonresistance and the way of love." Another, "The true C.P.S. vision means that we see Christian love in all its facets." Various considerations of Christian charity and techniques of applying principles of Christian love —such as the second-mile and overcoming-evil-with-good, were pointed out. From this common note struck throughout the majority of contributions in the symposium it would seem that the C.P.S. vision, in broad terms, might be said to be the ideal of Christian love.

# The Mennonite Central Committee

The Mennonite Central Committee came into existence in response to a felt need when famine-stricken Europe called for relief and the Mennonites of America impelled by the love of Christ were anxious to extend a helping hand. In response to the urge from without and that from within, the M.C.C., which is essentially a service committee has, during the years of its existence from September 1920 until now, found many opportunities to employ its offices in the interest of our people. Its field of activity has extended considerably beyond the initial purpose of distributing food to those of the household of faith in famine-stricken Russia. Continuing in the attitude of service and the will to please our Lord, we have been called upon not only to distribute relief supplies, but also to aid in colonizing refugees in the United States, Canada, Mexico, and South America; to be responsible for the Civilian Public Service program; and to clarify and publicize our historic peace attitude. In all this we have endeavored to assist all with whom we work into a saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and a life of greater usefulness and service. In all our contacts we endeavor to demonstrate the Jesus way of life through example and testimony.

Confessionally we stand on the teachings of Christ as presented in the Gospels and interpreted by the lives and letters of the apostles as recorded in Scripture. Even though we represent a number of groups of Mennonites who differ more or less in their modes of life and in their church practices, we all agree on the essentials of faith in Christ, the Son of God as the Saviour and coming Prince of Peace through whom alone there is forgiveness of sin, peace in the heart, victory over sin, and life everlasting. With Christian charity we respect our differences, finding no occasion to meddle with matters which might disrupt our unity of effort to give expression to the sacred trust that we all share. Appearing in a spirit of prayer before God we leave our differences under the cross and proceed in the name of Christ with a united front. In humility and sincere gratefulness to our Lord and to those who have from time to time served on the Mennonite Central Committee, we report that decisions on issues are not made on the basis of a mere majority or a divided house, but on the basis of a general concurrence and understanding and the conviction that we are acting in the will of God.

We are confident that we are following in the footsteps of our blessed Lord and Master and trust that we are acting as true and faithful servants of humanity and our people in particular, in an effort to give practical expression to our faith and of the Spirit of Christ that indwells His faithful children.—P. C. Hiebert, Chairman